

Message Text

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ORIGIN HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 AID-05 INSE-00 CIAE-00
INR-07 NSAE-00 VO-05 INRE-00 SSO-00 SS-15 PRS-01
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O P 262227Z JAN 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK IMMEDIATE
USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR PRIORITY
AMCONSUL HONG KONG PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 021760

E O 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF

SUBJECT:THAI ATTITUDE TOWARD BOAT REFUGEES

1. UPI ON JANUARY 26 CARRIED STORY THAT COL. KAMOL PRACH-
UABMOL, A KEY MOI OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE FOR REFUGEES, HAD
SAID TO THE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS' CLUB OF THAILAND ON
JANUARY 25 THAT "RTG NAVY PATROL BOATS ARE BLOCKING VIETNAM-
ESE REFUGEES FROM LANDING" UNLESS THE BOAT IS JUDGED UNSEA-
WORTHY.

2. IF KAMOL IS CORRECTLY QUOTED, SUCH A POSITION WOULD FLY
IN THE FACE OF ALL ASSURANCES RECENTLY PROVIDED TO USG OF-
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FICIALS THAT IT IS NOT THE POLICY OF THE RTG TO TURN AWAY
REFUGEE BOATS. THE FACT THAT BOATS MIGHT BE TURNED AWAY BY
FORCE BY RTG NAVY BOATS PRIOR TO THEIR ACTUALLY ENTERING
THAI TERRITORIAL WATERS IS A LEGAL FICTION WHICH WOULD HAVE
NO BEARING ON THE CREDIBILITY OF SUCH THAI ASSURANCES. NEITH-
ER WOULD SUCH A TACTIC LESSEN THE DAMAGE TO THE THAI HUMANI-
TARIAN IMAGE IF REFUGEES ARE ACTUALLY TURNED AWAY IN THIS

FASHION.

3. EMBASSY SHOULD INFORM THAI GOVERNMENT THAT THE RECENTLY AUTHORIZED PAROLE FOR 7,000 ADDITIONAL BOAT REFUGEES WILL PROVIDE ADEQUATE RESETTLEMENT OPPORTUNITIES TO ASSIST BOAT REFUGEES NOW IN THAILAND WITHOUT RESETTLEMENT OFFERS AND THOSE EXPECTED TO ARRIVE OVER THE COMING MONTHS WHO ARE NOT ACCEPTED BY OTHER COUNTRIES OF RESETTLEMENT. EMBASSY SHOULD URGE THAT BOATS BE ALLOWED TO LAND FOR PROCESSING BY COUNTRIES OPERATING REFUGEE PROGRAMS.

4. THE UPI STORY QUOTES KAMOL AS CRITICIZING FOREIGN RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMS AS OPERATING TOO SLOWLY. OBVIOUSLY, WE ALL WISH TO SEE REFUGEES MOVED AS EXPEDITIOUSLY AS POSSIBLE BUT WE CANNOT BELIEVE THAT THE RTG WOULD TAKE THE POSITION THAT REFUGEES, FOR WHOM RESETTLEMENT OPPORTUNITIES EXIST, WOULD BE TURNED BACK TO SEA ON THESE GROUNDS. NOW THAT NEWLY ARRIVING BOAT REFUGEES ARE GUARANTEED RESETTLEMENT IN THE U.S. AND OTHER COUNTRIES, IT WOULD BE UNACCEPTABLE FOR RTG TO SHIFT TO MAKING SLOWNESS IN REFUGEE DEPARTURES TO COUNTRIES OF PERMANENT RESETTLEMENT A BASIS FOR REFUSING ENTRY TO BOAT REFUGEES.

5. FOR GENEVA: WHILE WE HOPE THAT NEWLY AUTHORIZED PAROLE WILL STABILIZE THIS SITUATION, WE ARE CONCERNED BY RECENT SIGNS OF SERIOUS DETERIORATION IN RTG ATTITUDES
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TOWARDS AND TOLERANCE OF BOAT REFUGEES. THUS, REQUEST MISSION TO DISCUSS ON AN URGENT BASIS WITH UNHCR IN ORDER TO STIMULATE INSTRUCTIONS TO UNHCR/BANGKOK REP GOODYEAR FOR A FURTHER DEMARCHE ON THIS SUBJECT.

6. BANGKOK 02711 JUST RECEIVED AND DEPARTMENT CONCURS COURSE OF ACTION OUTLINED BY AMBASSADOR. VANCE

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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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